

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
DALLAS DIVISION**

MELISSA K. WARNER,

Plaintiff,

v.

PROCOLLECT, INC.,

Defendant.

CIVIL COMPLAINT

CASE NO. 3:18-cv-01363

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

COMPLAINT

NOW comes MELISSA K. WARNER (“Plaintiff”), by and through her attorneys, Sulaiman Law Group, Ltd. (“Sulaiman”), complaining as to the conduct of PROCOLLECT, INC. (“Defendant”), as follows:

NATURE OF THE ACTION

1. Plaintiff brings this action for damages pursuant to the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (“FDCPA”) under 15 U.S.C. §1692 *et seq.*, the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (“TCPA”) under 47 U.S.C. §227 *et seq.*, and the Texas Debt Collection Act (“TDCA”) under Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392 *et seq.*, for Defendant’s unlawful conduct.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

2. This action arises under and is brought pursuant to the FDCPA and TCPA. Subject matter jurisdiction is conferred upon this Court by 15 U.S.C §1692, 47 U.S.C §227, 28 U.S.C. §§1331 and 1337, as the action arises under the laws of the United States. Supplemental jurisdiction exists for the state law claim pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1337.

3. Venue is proper in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1391 as Defendant is located in Northern District of Texas and a substantial portion the events or omissions giving rise to the claims occurred within the Northern District of Texas.

PARTIES

4. Plaintiff is a natural person over 18 years-of-age residing in Garland, Texas, which falls within the Northern District of Texas.

5. Plaintiff is a “person” as defined by 47 U.S.C. §153(39).

6. Defendant holds itself out as “one of the nation’s premier debt collection agencies . . .”¹ Defendant is a corporation organized under the laws of the state of Texas with its principal place of business located at 12170 Abrams Road, Suite 100, Dallas, Texas.

7. Defendant is a “person” as defined by 47 U.S.C. §153(39).

8. Defendant acted through its agents, employees, officers, members, directors, heirs, successors, assigns, principals, trustees, sureties, subrogees, representatives and insurers at all times relevant to the instant action.

FACTS SUPPORTING CAUSES OF ACTION

9. In 2017, Plaintiff began receiving calls to her cellular phone, (214) XXX-7672, from Defendant.

10. At all times relevant to the instant action, Plaintiff was the sole subscriber, owner, and operator of the cellular phone ending in 7672. Plaintiff is and always has been financially responsible for the cellular phone and its services.

11. Upon answering calls from Defendant, Plaintiff has experienced a significant pause, lasting several seconds in length, before she is connected with a live representative.

¹ <https://procollect.com/>

12. Upon speaking with Defendant's representatives, Plaintiff is informed that Defendant is attempting to collect upon a debt stemming from delinquent rent payments ("subject consumer debt") said to be owed by Plaintiff.

13. Plaintiff notified Defendant that was not in a position to pay the full balance, and demanded that Defendant stop calling her cellular phone.

14. Despite Plaintiff's demands, Defendant continued to call Plaintiff's cellular phone throughout 2017.

15. In late 2017, Plaintiff obtained a new cellular phone number, (972) XXX-6911.

16. At all times relevant to the instant action, Plaintiff was the sole subscriber, owner, and operator of the cellular phone ending in 6911. Plaintiff is and always has been financially responsible for the cellular phone and its services.

17. Shortly thereafter, Plaintiff began receiving collection calls to her new cellular phone ending in 6911, from Defendant.

18. Plaintiff has reiterated her demands that Defendant stop contacting her.

19. In spite of Plaintiff's efforts, Defendant has continued to place calls to Plaintiff's cellular phone up through the date of the filing of this action.

20. Defendant has used several different phone numbers when placing calls to Plaintiff's cellular phone, including but not limited to (214) 341-7788.

21. Upon information and belief, the aforementioned phone number ending in 7788 is regularly utilized by Defendant during its debt collection activity.

22. Plaintiff has received not less than 20 phone calls from Defendant since asking it to stop calling.

23. Frustrated over Defendant's conduct, Plaintiff spoke with Sulaiman regarding her rights, resulting in expenses.

24. Plaintiff has been unfairly and unnecessarily harassed by Defendant's actions.

25. Plaintiff has suffered concrete harm as a result of Defendant's actions, including but not limited to, invasion of privacy, aggravation that accompanies collection telephone calls, emotional distress, increased risk of personal injury resulting from the distraction caused by the repeated calls, increased usage of her telephone services, loss of cellular phone capacity, diminished cellular phone functionality, decreased battery life on her cellular phone, and diminished space for data storage on her cellular phone.

COUNT I – VIOLATIONS OF THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT

26. Plaintiff repeats and realleges paragraphs 1 through 25 as though fully set forth herein.

27. Plaintiff is a “consumer” as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(3) of the FDCPA.

28. Defendant is a “debt collector” as defined by §1692a(6) of the FDCPA, because it regularly use the mail and/or the telephone to collect, or attempt to collect, delinquent consumer accounts.

29. Defendant is engaged in the business of collecting or attempting to collect, directly or indirectly, defaulted debts owed or due or asserted to be owed or due to others. Defendant identifies itself as a debt collector and has been a member of the Association of Credit and Collection Professionals (“ACA”) since 2004.²

30. The subject consumer debt is a “debt” as defined by FDCPA §1692a(5) as it arises out of a transaction due or asserted to be due to another for personal, family, or household purposes.

a. Violations of FDCPA §1692c(a)(1) and §1692d

² <http://www.acainternational.org/search#memberdirectory>

31. The FDCPA, pursuant to 15 U.S.C. §1692d, prohibits a debt collector from engaging “in any conduct the natural consequence of which is to harass, oppress, or abuse any person in connection with the collection of a debt.” §1692d(5) further prohibits, “causing a telephone to ring or engaging any person in telephone conversation repeatedly or continuously with intent to annoy, abuse, or harass any person at the called number.”

32. Defendant violated §1692c(a)(1), d, and d(5) when it continuously called Plaintiff after being notified to stop. Defendant called Plaintiff at least 20 times after she demanded that it stop. This repeated behavior of systematically calling Plaintiff’s phone in spite of her demands was harassing and abusive. The frequency and volume of calls shows that Defendant willfully ignored Plaintiff’s pleas with the goal of annoying and harassing her.

33. Defendant was notified by Plaintiff that its calls were not welcomed. As such, Defendant knew that its conduct was inconvenient and harassing to her.

b. Violations of FDCPA § 1692e

34. The FDCPA, pursuant to 15 U.S.C. §1692e, prohibits a debt collector from using “any false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of any debt.”

35. In addition, this section enumerates specific violations, such as:

“The use of any false representation or deceptive means to collect or attempt to collect any debt or to obtain information concerning a consumer.” 15 U.S.C. §1692e(10).

36. Defendant violated §1692e and e(10) when it used deceptive means to collect or attempt to collect the subject debt. Defendant repeatedly contacted Plaintiff seeking to collect upon a debt after Plaintiff demanded that it stop calling. Notwithstanding Plaintiff’s demands, Defendant called Plaintiff at least 20 times in a deceptive attempt to force her to answer its calls and ultimately make a payment. Through its conduct, Defendant misleadingly represented to Plaintiff that it had the

legal ability to contact her via an automated system when, in fact, it had lost such lawful ability by virtue of Plaintiff's demand that it stop contacting her.

c. Violations of FDCPA § 1692f

37. The FDCPA, pursuant to 15 U.S.C. §1692f, prohibits a debt collector from using "unfair or unconscionable means to collect or attempt to collect any debt."

38. Defendant violated §1692f when it unfairly and unconscionably attempted to collect on a debt by continuously calling Plaintiff over 20 times after being notified to stop. Attempting to coerce Plaintiff into payment by placing voluminous phone calls to both of her cellular phones, without her permission, is unfair and unconscionable behavior. These means employed by Defendant only served to worry and confuse Plaintiff.

39. As pled in paragraphs 22 through 25, Plaintiff has been harmed and suffered damages as a result of Defendant's illegal actions.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, MELISSA K. WARNER, respectfully requests that this Honorable Court enter judgment in her favor as follows:

- a. Declaring that the practices complained of herein are unlawful and violate the aforementioned bodies of law;
- b. Awarding Plaintiff statutory damages of \$1,000.00 as provided under 15 U.S.C. §1692k(a)(2)(A);
- c. Awarding Plaintiff actual damages, in an amount to be determined at trial, as provided under 15 U.S.C. §1692k(a)(1);
- d. Awarding Plaintiff costs and reasonable attorney fees as provided under 15 U.S.C. §1692k(a)(3); and
- e. Awarding any other relief as this Honorable Court deems just and appropriate.

COUNT II – VIOLATIONS OF THE TELEPHONE CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

40. Plaintiff repeats and realleges paragraphs 1 through 39 as though fully set forth herein.

41. The TCPA, pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(1)(iii), prohibits calling persons on their cellular phone using an automatic telephone dialing system (“ATDS”) without their consent. The TCPA, under 47 U.S.C. § 227(a)(1), defines an ATDS as “equipment which has the capacity...to store or produce telephone numbers to be called, using a random or sequential number generator; and to dial such numbers.”

42. Defendant used an ATDS in connection with its communications directed towards Plaintiff’s cellular phone. The significant pause, lasting several seconds in length, which Plaintiff experiences during answered calls from Defendant is instructive that an ATDS is being utilized to generate the phone calls. Additionally, the nature and frequency of Defendant’s contacts points to the involvement of an ATDS.

43. Defendant violated the TCPA by placing at least 20 phone calls to Plaintiff’s cellular phone using an ATDS without her consent. Any consent that Plaintiff *may* have given to the originator of the subject consumer debt, which Defendant will likely assert transferred down, was specifically revoked by Plaintiff’s demands that Defendant cease contacting her.

44. The calls placed by Defendant to Plaintiff were regarding collection activity and not for emergency purposes as defined by the TCPA under 47 U.S.C. §227(b)(1)(A)(i).

45. Under the TCPA, pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(3)(B), Defendant is liable to Plaintiff for at least \$500.00 per call. Moreover, Defendant’s willful and knowing violations of the TCPA should trigger this Honorable Court’s ability to triple the damages to which Plaintiff is otherwise entitled to under 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(3)(C).

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, MELISSA K. WARNER, respectfully requests that this Honorable Court enter judgment in her favor as follows:

- a. Declaring that the practices complained of herein are unlawful and violate the aforementioned statutes and regulations;

- b. Awarding Plaintiff damages of at least \$500.00 per phone call and treble damages pursuant to 47 U.S.C. §§ 227(b)(3)(B)&(C);
- c. Awarding Plaintiff costs and reasonable attorney fees; and
- d. Awarding any other relief as this Honorable Court deems just and appropriate.

COUNT III – VIOLATIONS OF THE TEXAS DEBT COLLECTION ACT

- 46. Plaintiff restates and realleges paragraphs 1 through 45 as though fully set forth herein.
- 47. Plaintiff is a “consumer” as defined by Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.001(1).
- 48. Defendant is a “debt collector” and a “third party debt collector” as defined by Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.001(6) and (7).
- 49. The subject consumer debt is a “consumer debt” as defined by Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.001(2) as it is an obligation, or alleged obligation, arising from a transaction for personal, family, or household purposes.

a. Violations of TDCA § 392.302

- 50. The TDCA, pursuant to Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.302(4), states that “a debt collector may not oppress, harass, or abuse a person by causing a telephone to ring repeatedly or continuously, or making repeated or continuous telephone calls, with the intent to harass a person at the called number.”

- 51. Defendant violated the TDCA when it continued to call Plaintiff’s cellular phone at least 20 times after she notified it to stop calling. This repeated behavior of systematically calling Plaintiff’s phone in spite of her demands was harassing and abusive. Further, the nature and frequency of phone calls would naturally cause an individual to feel oppressed.

b. Violations of TDCA § 392.304

52. The TDCA, pursuant to Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.304(19) prohibits a debt collector from “using any . . . false representation or deceptive means to collect a debt or obtain information concerning a consumer.”

53. Defendant violated the TDCA through the implicit misrepresentations made on phone calls placed to Plaintiff’s cellular phone. Through its conduct, Defendant misleadingly represented to Plaintiff that it had the lawful ability to continue contacting her cellular phone using an automated system absent her consent. Such lawful ability was revoked upon Plaintiff demanding that Defendant stop calling her cellular phone, illustrating the deceptive nature of Defendant’s conduct.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, MELISSA K. WARNER, respectfully requests that this Honorable Court enter judgment in her favor as follows:

- a. Declaring that the practices complained of herein are unlawful and violate the aforementioned statutes and regulations;
- b. Entitling Plaintiff to injunctive relief pursuant to Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.403(a)(1).
- c. Awarding Plaintiff actual damages, pursuant to Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.403(a)(2).
- d. Awarding Plaintiff punitive damages, in an amount to be determined at trial, for the underlying violations;
- e. Awarding Plaintiff costs and reasonable attorney fees, pursuant to Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.403(b);
- f. Awarding any other relief as this Honorable Court deems just and appropriate.

Dated: May 30, 2018

s/ Nathan C. Volheim

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Respectfully submitted,

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